



# NEWS RELEASE

GREAT PLAINS REGIONAL OFFICE

2525 River Road, Bismarck, ND 58503  
701.355.3500 • [www.ducks.org](http://www.ducks.org)

## DU BREAKS GROUND ON OUTDOOR HERITAGE PROJECTS

ALEXANDRIA, Minn., Nov. 17, 2009 – Ducks Unlimited has broken ground for three western Minnesota shallow lake enhancement projects supported in part by a grant from the newly created Outdoor Heritage Fund, as recommended by the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council. With November's warm weather, DU was able to move forward with the projects before freeze-up.

"The very wet month of October delayed us, but construction is now underway," said Jon Schneider, manager of Minnesota conservation programs for DU. "These are three of several shallow lake improvement projects we have underway around the state as part of DU's *Living Lakes* Initiative, and we are pleased to break ground to get construction of them going now before winter finally arrives."

The three OHF funded projects include 218-acre Ash Lake on the Mud Lake Waterfowl Production Area in Grant County, 147-acre Cory Lake on the Hamlin Wildlife Management Area in Lac Qui Parle County, and 162-acre Round Lake on the Shetek WMA in Murray County.

DU engineered water control structures for the lakes that Minnesota Department of Natural Resources wildlife managers will use to periodically draw-down water levels to induce winterkill of invasive fish and rejuvenate the aquatic ecology of these large wetland basins. Gravity will be enough to handle draw-downs on Round Lake, but DU installed permanent electric pumps on Ash Lake and Cory Lake for more precise control over water levels. The structures will mitigate for major hydrologic changes in their watersheds that have left these shallow lakes turbid and dominated by invasive fish that suspend nutrients in the water.

DU staff engineers and biologists surveyed and designed these projects in previous years. Construction was initiated after the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council approved the accomplishment work plans for the nearly \$3 million in grants to DU. Additional project funding was secured for this work from the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, Flint Hills Resources, and DU major sponsor donors or individuals.

"Shallow lakes are the cornerstone of Minnesota's remaining waterfowl habitat," Schneider said. "With approximately 90 percent of our prairie wetlands lost here, we are focused on improving and protecting those large marshes and shallow lake basins that remain for both migrating and breeding waterfowl. This infusion of newly dedicated conservation tax funding will really help us get more conservation work done for the ducks, and we are thrilled to receive support from the Council this year."

Other DU shallow lake enhancement projects currently under construction in Minnesota include Perch Lake and Cottonwood Lake in Blue Earth County, Hurricane Lake in Cottonwood County, and Gislason Lake in Lincoln County. Several other projects have been fully engineered and will be constructed later this winter and next year through DU's grant from the OHF once final permits and easements are issued and secured by agency partners.

This cooperative partnership work between DU and DNR to enhance degraded shallow lakes will help fulfill the shallow lake goals of both DNR's *Duck Recovery Plan* and DU's *Living Lakes*. These projects also address the habitat objectives of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan.

Ducks Unlimited is the world's largest non-profit organization dedicated to conserving North America's continually disappearing waterfowl habitats. Established in 1937, Ducks Unlimited has conserved nearly 13 million acres thanks to contributions from more than a million supporters across the continent. Guided by science and dedicated to program efficiency, DU works toward the vision of wetlands sufficient to fill the skies with waterfowl today, tomorrow and forever.

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Becky Jones Mahlum Bismarck, ND 701-355-3507 [bjonesmahlum@ducks.org](mailto:bjonesmahlum@ducks.org)  
Jennifer Kross Bismarck, ND 701-355-3515 [jkross@ducks.org](mailto:jkross@ducks.org)



Photo Caption: Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council Members and Staff toured DU's pending Ash Lake improvement project on June 17, 2009. From left to right: Council Member Les Bensch, Senate Legislative Analyst Greg Knopff, Council Chairman Mike Kilgore, Council Member Jim Cox, Council Member Darby Nelson, and Council Executive Director Bill Becker.